Lambda Letters Project

32590

Vol. 5, No 6 June, 1997 www.humboldt1.com/~mamurphy/lambdaletters LambdaLP@aol.com (916) 965-6851

E-mail Alerts: A Potent New Tool

Lavender Library, Archives and Cultural Exchange Sacramento, CA

Lambda Letters Project has been issuing e-mail alerts to a modest list of people for some time now. However, we recently acquired a much larger list of e-mail addresses of activists in the community. We also recently acquired a complete list of e-mail addresses of the members of the state legislature. As a result, there has been an amazing growth in the number of pro-gay e-mail messages going to our legislators.

For example, in April, our members and friends sent 532 e-mail messages to the Assembly in support of legislation that we care about. An additional 3,430 messages were sent between May 1st and May 22nd (when this article was written).

The advantage of e-mail is that it is fast, so it can be used in the day-to-day battle over legislation that is of great importance to the community. When we at Lambda Letters hear of an urgent need for constituent input on a bill, we send out an urgent alert. Within days, our legislators receive hundreds of messages in support of or opposition to the bill. Our usual process of sending letters through the mail works well in some situations, but is too slow for some of the fast-changing events in the legislature.

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Telephone Activism for June

Our Telephone Activism call this month is to support the ratification by the U.S. of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

Please call Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein at (800) 972-3524. (Be patient. It takes the switchboard awhile to answer.) When the Capitol switchboard operator answers, ask first to be connected to Senator Boxer's office. When the receptionist in the senator's office answers the phone, say you would like to leave a message for her. Then leave a message to the following effect: "Please tell the Senator that I want her to persuade the U.S. Senate to approve the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I also hope she will urge our government to sponsor another international convention for the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity."

Then please call the office of Senator Feinstein and leave the same message.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

April, 1997	3,261 letters
In all of 1997	10,841 letters

Dollars Spent

April, 1997	$1,419
In all of 1997	$6,813

Can You Help?

Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

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Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Publication of the name of any person or organization in articles or advertising in the Lambda Letters Project newsletter is not to be construed as any indication of the sexual orientation of such person or organization.

Confidentiality

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

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Have you experienced employment discrimination because of your actual or perceived sexual orientation? If so, you may register a complaint with one of the following Division of Labor Standards Enforcement district offices.

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Santa Rosa (707-576-2363)	Stockton (209-948-7770)
Van Nuys (818-901-5312)	Ventura (805-654-4538)

*These cities share an office.

Call Congress for Free!

(800) 972-3524

(Be patient. It may take a while for them to answer.)
Ask to be put through to your Senator or Representative.

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Business-card sized ads (3½" × 2") $10 per issue, quarter-page ads $20 per issue, half-page ads $30 per issue, full-page ads $50 per issue. Deadline for payment and camera-ready copy, along with your name and phone number, is the 25th of each month.

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People of Color Issue

Protect the Health of Children

by Boyce Hinman

According to data supplied by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, 1.6 million California children have no health insurance. Seventeen percent of California's children lack private health insurance, Medi-Cal, Medicare, or any other form of coverage. Latino/a children are particularly disadvantaged as 29 percent of them are without health care insurance of any kind.

This lack of health care coverage is not limited to children in families where the parents or care givers are unemployed. In fact, 89 percent of the children without health insurance live in families with at least one working parent. Furthermore, 60 percent of the uninsured children live in families in which at least one parent is working full-time for the whole year. These figures result from the fact that most small businesses are unable to afford insurance for their employees and the employees' families.

Health insurance for children is crucial. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children receive a physical examination every year and that infants under two years old receive well-baby checkups more frequently. These examinations are essential to monitor growth, nutrition, and development and to identify and treat health problems early. Lack of insurance reduces access to immunizations, well-baby checkups, and health education and preventive health services that address high-risk behaviors among adolescents.

H.R. 1363 and H.R. 1364 respond to this situation by creating a program of grants to the states to provide health insurance to children up to the age of 18. The bill is sponsored by four members of the House of Representatives from California: Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D–San Francisco), Robert Matsui (D–Sacramento), Frank Riggs (R–Napa), and Pete Stark (D–Fremont).

Participation by the states is voluntary. States that do opt into the plan would contract with insurance companies to create child-only health insurance policies. The states would provide vouchers to assist parents in paying for insurance for their children or to pay an employee's share of the premium for dependent coverage offered by an employer.

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HIV/AIDS Issue

Needle Exchange Pilot Project

by Katharine Holland

Approximately 32 percent of all AIDS cases in the U.S. have been associated with injection drug use and is the primary source of heterosexual and perinatal transmission of AIDS in this country and Europe. S.B. 885, the Clean Needle and Syringe Exchange Pilot Program (Watson, D–Los Angeles), would establish a clean needle exchange pilot project to prevent the transmission of HIV through contaminated needles. S.B. 885 would require the Department of Health Services to authorize a one-for-one clean needle and syringe exchange program in Los Angeles, Long Beach, San Jose, and San Francisco, upon the request of the city councils and mayors of those cities. If the local health officer determined that the pilot project had a detrimental effect on drug use and the increase in HIV, it would be terminated.

This bill is supported by nearly two dozen organizations, including LIFE Lobby and the San Francisco AIDS Foundation. The Committee on Moral Concerns, the Department of Finance, and the Attorney General's Office are in opposition to this bill. Opposers claim that it would send the message that drug addiction is not terrible and that AIDS is the only real threat.

Unfortunately, S.B. 885 failed in the Senate on May 27th. Twenty senators voted for it and sixteen voted against it. Only twenty-one favorable votes were needed to approve the bill and send it to the Assembly. However, Senator Watson may ask for a new vote on the bill prior to the June 6th deadline for passing a bill out of its house of origin. Whatever happens by then will determine the wording of your HIV/AIDS letter. Either it will ask your Assemblymember for his or her support of S.B. 885, or it will express dismay at the failure of this important bill.

(916) 334-7717

BEA BETZNER, M.A., M.F.C.C.
Marriage Family Child Counselor
State License No. MFC 30303

5120 Manzanita, Suite 100
Carmichael, CA 95608

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Issue

Supporting ENDA, Even If Imperfect

by Hilary Cook

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) will be introduced in both the House and the Senate at the beginning of June. This bill would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in much the same way that Title VII (The Civil Rights Act of 1964) protects people on the bases of race, gender, religion, national origin, or disability. Currently only nine states and the District of Columbia have legislation aimed at protecting gays, lesbians, and bisexuals from discrimination in the workplace. ENDA would set a national basic standard of protection that would be invaluable in those states that have little or no protections for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals—as well as providing additional protection in those that have.

Sadly, ENDA does not go as far as Title VII and the other workplace legislation on which it is based. ENDA would not apply to the military, to religious organizations, or to businesses with fewer than fifteen employees. It also does not require that businesses extend partner benefits to same-sex partners on the same basis that they extend them to their other employees. In fact, it specifically prohibits preferential treatment or quotas based on the sexual orientation of the applicant or employee.

ENDA does, however, protect people from outright discrimination or firing on the basis of their sexual orientation, real or perceived. Right now, in the majority of states, employers are free to discriminate openly against gay men, lesbians, or bisexuals. And they do. Legally there is nothing that an employee or a court can do to prevent it. ENDA would provide a good start in the fight for equality in the workplace for gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. In the long run, the differences between ENDA and the protections afforded other groups may come to be seen as a leftover from less enlightened times, and be amended accordingly. While waiting for that time to come, please sign the letter to your representative urging him or her to support it

Women's Issue

More Teeth Needed in Domestic Violence Law

by Carla Leek

A.B. 45 (Murray, D–Culver City) promises to close some of the gaps in California's domestic violence laws. Currently, domestic violence cases can be pursued as felonies or misdemeanors. Non-domestic violence cases can be pursued only as misdemeanors. According to California law, a domestic violence case involves spouses, cohabitants, or people who have children together. Non-domestic violence involves former spouses, people engaged to be married, and people in a dating relationship.

Clearly, the current law allows many perpetrators of intimate violence to slip by with misdemeanors. A.B. 45 will change the definition of domestic violence to include non-cohabitating intimate partners. This, in turn, will allow more cases of domestic violence to be pursued as felonies.

A.B. 45 also requires courts to issue applicable restraining orders in criminal cases and authorizes judges to set bail for a violation of a domestic violence restraining order at "any amount deemed necessary." Currently, bail for misdemeanor violation of a domestic violence restraining order is only $250, an amount that allows many accused abusers to get out of jail within hours of arrest.

A.B. 45 will go to the Senate Public Safety Committee in late June. Since Senators Vasconcellos (chair) and Burton are key members of the committee, please write them urging their support of this important bill. Domestic violence is a crime of relationships, not living arrangements.

Lavender Valentines

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State Legislative Update: Part II

There have been no remarkable changes since last month's legislative status report. The greatest change to note is that the struggle to get "our bills" passed has become intense. Lambda Letters, with your help, has been waging a day-to-day battle on the bills that affect our community. For example, since January we have delivered 2,705 letters and e-mail messages in support of A.B. 101, the Dignity For All Students Act. In just one week in mid-May, we delivered over 1,500 e-mail messages in support of the bill to the State Assembly. And yet, as of late May, this bill was in the inactive file on the Assembly floor.

A.B. 101 was in the inactive file because we didn't yet have the votes to pass it in the Assembly. The bill is not dead as of the writing of this article (late May), but there is still much work to be done on its behalf. Nonetheless, inactive status has one benefit: no hostile amendments can be added to it. A sad example of what can happen when a hostile amendment is added can be shown by the case of A.B. 1059, which was amended on May 23rd on the Assembly floor. The amendment removed a provision of the bill that would have established a statewide registry of domestic partners.

Some of the bills we support are in inactive status in a committee. That usually means the author does not have the votes to get the bill passed out of committee. Often the legislator is still working to get the necessary votes. Many of our bills are in the "suspense file" of the Assembly or Senate Appropriations Committee. The rules of the legislature require that any bill which might cost $150,000 or more in monies from the state's General Fund must be put on suspense until the legislature gets a clearer picture of what the new budget looks like. Many of these bills will probably be voted on in the Committee in late May or early June. We will keep you informed of their fate.

Would you like to help us track the bills that are important to our communities? We particularly need help tracking bills in the areas of HIV/AIDS, people of color issues, and women's issues. We could also use help creating e-mail alerts and letters from the Lambda Letters Administrator on these bills. Interested persons may send us a note with their letters.

Starting on the right is the list of bills.

HIV/AIDS Issues

A.B. 818 (Martinez, D–Alhambra)
Purpose: To require doctors to offer voluntary HIV testing and counseling to patients aged 15–54.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed Assembly Health Committee. Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 535 (Vasconcellos, D–San Jose)
Purpose: To implement Prop. 215, the marijuana initiative.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed Senate Public Safety Committee. Is in the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

L/G/B/T Issues

A.B. 53 (Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: To allow adoptions by lesbian or gay couples and other unmarried persons. It would overturn the Governor's policy on adoptions.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Approved in all its Assembly Committees and, at this writing, is awaiting a vote on the Assembly floor.

A.B. 54 (Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: To establish a statewide system for registering domestic partnerships.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed all Assembly Committees. Is in the inactive file on the Assembly floor.

A.B. 101 (Kuehl, D–Encino)
Purpose: To prohibit sexual orientation–based discrimination and harassment in public schools and colleges.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed all Assembly Committees. Is in the inactive file on the Assembly floor.

A.B. 257 (Villaraigosa, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To add a ban on sexual orientation–based discrimination to the Fair Employment and Housing Act. Would ban such discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

A.B. 427 (Knox, D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To provide domestic partner health care benefits for state employees.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Is in Assembly Public Employees Retirement and Social Security Committee. Prospects for committee approval look uncertain.

A.B. 492 (Keeley, D–Santa Cruz)
Purpose: Currently the State Labor Code prohibits sexual

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orientation–based employment discrimination, but private non-profits are exempted. Originally the bill would have narrowed the exemption to non-profits established for a religious purpose. The author dropped that provision. Now the bill simply expands the period for submitting a complaint of discriminations from the current 30-day limit up to one year.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

A.B. 800 (Margett, R–Arcadia)
Purpose: To ban the recognition of same-sex marriages that might occur legally in another state.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Defeated in the Assembly Judiciary Committee.

A.B. 1059 (Migden, D–San Francisco)
Purpose: To require insurers to offer employers the option of offering domestic partner health benefits to their employees. Does not require employers to offer domestic partner benefits to their employees. Originally the bill would also have established a statewide registry of domestic partnerships. However this was removed from the bill by an unfriendly amendment on the Assembly floor.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed all Assembly committees. Is pending on the Assembly floor.

S.B. 841 (Hayden D–Los Angeles)
Purpose: To require that all employers who get contracts with state or local governments provide benefits to the domestic partners of their employees whenever they offer such benefits to the spouses of their employees.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Failed in the Senate Judiciary Committee. Was granted reconsideration, but cannot be taken up again until January, 1998.

S.B. 911 (Knight, R–Palmdale)
Purpose: To ban the recognition of same-sex marriages that might occur legally in another state.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Failed in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Person of Color Issues

A.B. 36 (Firestone, R–Campbell)
Purpose: To relieve school districts of teaching core curriculum subjects in the primary languages of students with limited English skills.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Failed in the Assembly Education Committee.

A.B. 37 (Firestone, R–Campbell)
Purpose: To allow state colleges and universities to assess public school districts when the graduates of high schools in those districts need remedial education classes in college. Would leave school districts with fewer dollars to provide a quality education.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Failed in Assembly Education Committee.

A.B. 50 and A.B. 51 (Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: To increase penalties for hate-based arson of churches.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Both passed the Assembly Public Safety Committee. They are now in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

A.B. 748 (Escutia, D–Huntington Park)
Purpose: To require that objective annual studies be done of the primary languages of limited English–proficient students and of their progress in learning English. Results of the study would be used to determine how to modify and improve the methods of teaching English to limited English–proficient students
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Is in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 6 (Alpert, D–San Diego)
Purpose: To relieve school districts of teaching core curriculum subjects in the primary languages of students with limited English skills.
LLP Position: Oppose.
Status: Passed by the Senate Education Committee. Is now in the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 34 (Vasconcellos D–San Jose)
Purpose: To provide medically necessary pregnancy services to low-income aliens who would qualify for Medi-Cal except for the fact that they do not meet the residency requirements for Medi-Cal.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed the Senate Committee on Health and Human Services. Is in the suspense file of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Women's Issues

A.B. 45 (Murray, D–Culver City)
Purpose: To add a fiancé(e) of someone with whom a domestic abuser has had a dating relationship to the list of legally recognizable victims of domestic abuse.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed Assembly Public Safety Committee. Is now in the suspense file of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

A.B. 200 (Kuehl, D–Encino)
Purpose: To create a rebuttable assumption that a convicted domestic abuser should not have custody of children. The burden of proof would be on the abuser.
LLP Position: Support.
Status: Passed the Assembly. Is now in the Senate Judiciary Committee.

E-mail Alerts: A Potent New Tool

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Do you have e-mail? Would you like to receive our e-mail alerts? If so, please send us an e-mail message at LambdaLP@aol.com. Tell us you would like to receive our e-mail alerts. We'll immediately add you to our alert list.

Unfortunately, there is a flaw to our new system. Almost all of our alerts have been regarding legislation related to our lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender issue area. Lambda Letters is founded on the concept that coalition politics is in the best interest of the LGBT community. We really should be doing alerts on our other areas too: AIDS/HIV issues, people of color issues, and women's issues. The problem is that we have no one to keep track of legislation in these other areas and to create alerts about that legislation.

Would you be willing to do this work in any of our four issue areas? We can provide e-mail addresses of the legislators, sources of information on legislation pertinent to each of our subject areas, and some tutoring in how to construct the alerts that you send. All you need are a computer with access to the Internet and decent writing skills.

Creating these alerts is exciting. It allows you to play a crucial role in protecting the communities that we serve. Give it a try. Let us know at LambdaLP@aol.com and tell us that you want to help us in this important effort.

Silence is the virtue of fools.
— Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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June Telephone Activism

Continued from page 1

The word "convention," as used here, is not a meeting like the Democratic or Republican Conventions. Instead, it means a treaty between nations. This particular treaty was adopted by the United Nations in 1979. In it, the United Nations and all nations that signed the convention agreed to work toward ending gender discrimination. The United States is the only industrialized nation in the world that has not ratified the convention. The U.S. Senate is the body that ratifies treaties or conventions for our country and they need to hear the importance of signing this treaty.

Unfortunately, the convention does not concern discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. Although these forms of discrimination need to be addressed by the world's governments, it's also true that if the U.S. tried to add those subjects to the treaty at this time, then the other governments would have to ratify the treaty all over again. We would run the risk of them not doing so.

Because it is very important that nations combat discrimination against women, it is necessary to ratify the treaty as it now stands. However, it is entirely proper to ask the U.S. to sponsor another treaty to fight sexual orientation and gender identity–based discrimination. Now you may think this is unlikely to happen "in your lifetime," but such changes can indeed happen over time after repeated demands.

Please make your free telephone call to Congress and urge our senators to support passage of the important treaty to fight discrimination against women. Then please return your pink response slip and let us know that you called.

Hot News!

Sacramento Quick Print has closed the retail location on J Street, but continues to be a proud supporter of the Lambda Letters Project.

Joanne Moore,
printing consultant
(916) 442-5615 voice mail
(916) 442-6891 fax

Signature Gatherers Needed

A significant number of the signed letters we gather each month are collected by volunteer signature gathers from around the state. Typically, these volunteers bring copies of our letters to meetings of groups they already attend, such as PFLAG, NOW, etc. They invite people at the meetings to review the letters and sign the ones with which they agree.

Lambda Letters needs additional volunteers to do this work. Would you be willing to gather signatures on our letters? If so, we can provide you with a supply of letters each month. We can also send return-addressed, stamped envelopes for use in returning the signed letters to us.

Please let us know if you would be willing to gather signatures for us by enclosing a note when you return your own letters this month. Tell us how many copies of the letters you would like us to provide each month. We will take care of the rest.

Lambda Letters AIDS Analyst Needed

We need a volunteer with good writing skills who can spend about ten hours each month researching possible subjects and then composing monthly sample letters and articles on HIV/AIDS–related issues or legislation for our newsletter. If the volunteer lives in Sacramento, he or she would also attend a monthly, two- to three-hour staff meeting in which each month's subjects are chosen and other important business of the Project is accomplished. Staff meetings are usually held mid-month on a Sunday afternoon. As an alternative, a volunteer living elsewhere in California can join the meeting by telephone. We do need a California resident for this position, however.

Lambda Letters can provide leads on how to find suitable subjects and advice on writing, if needed. This is a great opportunity for you to influence the subjects we cover. Please consider volunteering for this important position, or help us find the person to do it.

If you're interested, please send us a note with your letters or call Boyce Hinman at (916) 965-6851, or send an e-mail message to LambdaLP@aol.com.

Letter Stuffers Needed

Each month a team of volunteers gathers to prepare the monthly mailings received by our members. Usually this occurs on the first Thursday of the month and it is done at the offices of OutSourcing Management in Sacramento. Sandy Virago, owner of that management services company, has been kind enough to let us use her office for several years.

Generally we gather at 7 P.M. and work until about 8:30 or 9 P.M. Refreshments and a door prize are provided and we generally have a good time working together. It is a very sociable gathering. If you live in the greater Sacramento area, and would like to help us prepare our mailings, please send us a note with your letters or call us at (916) 965-6851.

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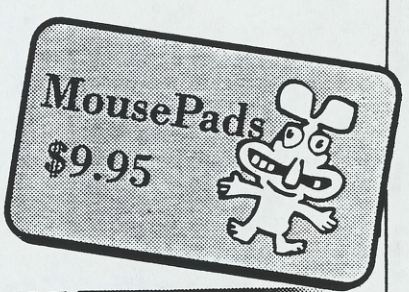

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Protecting Health of Children

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To ensure that coverage goes to those most in need, states will be required to set income eligibility levels for assistance under the program. First priority will go to low-income families. The states will also be required to maintain their current Medicaid eligibility criteria and not dump their Medicaid caseloads into the new program. Finally, the states will be required to contribute between 10–20 percent of the cost of the program.

The only difference between H.R. 1363 and H.R. 1364 is that the former does not identify a source of revenue to pay for the program, whereas the latter pays for it with an increase in the cigarette tax. Please protect the children. Please write to your member of the House of Representatives in support of H.R. 1363 and H.R. 1364.

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A Village Called Humanity

If we could shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:

- There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South), and 8 Africans
- 51 would be female; 49 would be male
- 70 would be nonwhite; 30 white
- 70 would be non-Christian; 30 Christian
- 50% of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people and all 6 would be citizens of the United States
- 80 would live in substandard housing
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 1 would be near death, 1 would be near birth
- Only 1 would have a college education
- No one would own a computer

When one considers our world from such an incredibly compressed perspective, the need for both tolerance and understanding becomes glaringly apparent.

So look around you and embrace your fellow citizens of the world, all members of a village called humanity, who breathe life into this planet—each in a unique manner and for only a minuscule moment in time—then leave their individual legacies to form, molecule by molecule and compound by compound, the history of the human race.

We are one. Let's love one another, living and working together in peace and shared prosperity.

—Sent in by one of our members, found on the Internet. We think it expresses the spirit of compassion that is central to the concept of Lambda Letters and why we believe so strongly in coalition politics.

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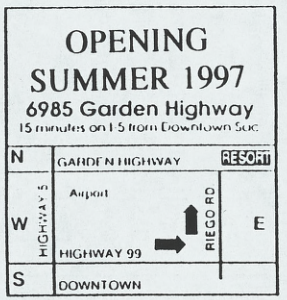

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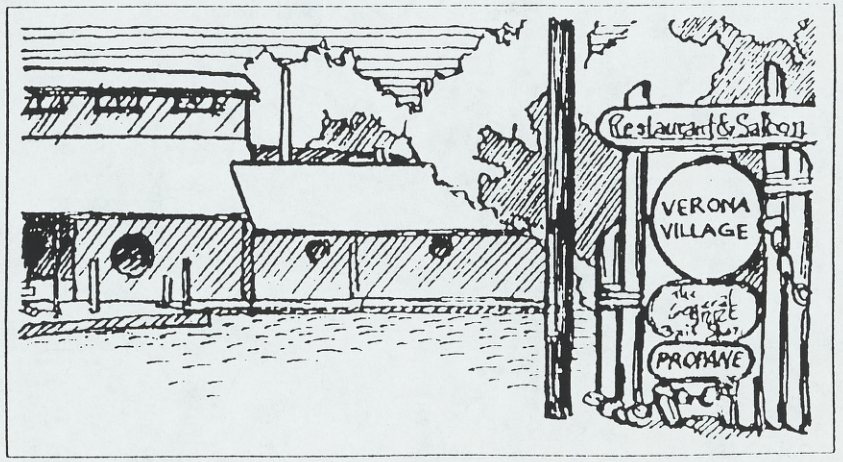

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